

28 March 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Meeting with the Russell Committee, Wednesday,
March 28th, 2:30 p. m.

In attendance: Russell, Saltonstall, Stennis, Byrd,
Young, Hayden, part of time,

Mr. Warner is preparing a memorandum on the substance of the long meeting. However, the following points are of importance:

1. Senator Russell expressed opposition to President Kennedy's statement concerning elicit raids on Cuba. He stated in most positive terms that since the United States had organized and supported the biggest of all raids (the Bay of Pigs) he did not see how we could justify taking a position that raids of smaller proportions were ineffective and improper.

2. All of the Senators questioned me at great length concerning the number of troops, Soviet troops, in Cuba. The explanation that the figure of 17,500 was synthesis of all intelligence including table of organization of Soviet units known to be in Cuba, information from

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25X1 [redacted] that about 3,000 had withdrawn, and of this number perhaps one-half to two-thirds the number was established by actual "head count" but that there was no reliable information on how many Soviet military personnel had come in on the large number of ships arriving in Cuba during the past three months. The Committee, therefore, concluded (and this without apparent criticism) that we do not know from intelligence resources just how many Soviet personnel are in Cuba. The Committee did not appear to be supporting a larger number than the estimated figure of 17,500.

3. Senators Russell, Saltonstall, and Byrd and later Stennis, questioned me at great length concerning the Soviet commitment to remove all of their troops from Cuba. I stated that no such commitment had been made by the Soviets. However, the Senators said on several occasions that they felt that the public had been misled and had been given the very definite impression by Administration spokesmen that the Soviets had firmly committed to remove all military personnel from Cuba, and that the Soviets were in default of a commitment by not so doing. I objected to this statement on the grounds that the

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only commitment that had been made was to remove units associated with the defense and security of the offensive weapons systems which were removed in October and November. The Committee raised this as a very serious issue and time and again repeated their contention that "the American public had been misled seriously into the belief that the Soviets had made a firm irrevocable commitment".

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JAM/bd (tape)

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